



**Metropolitan Homelessness Commission
9:30 am, January 10, 2013
Sonny West Conference Center
Howard Office Building (Fulton Complex)
700 Second Avenue South**

Present: Diane Kuhn, Lt. Melvin Brown, Steven Samra, Charles Strobel, Dayna Lovelady, Megan Barry, Mary Rolando, Tom Turner, Wendell Segroves, Jim Harbison, Burkley Allen, Phil Duke, Renee Pratt, Donzaleigh Powel

Metro Legal: Josh Lee

Staff: Will Connelly, director; Judith Tackett

Welcome & Roll Call

Diane Kuhn welcomes everybody and does roll call. She thanked all the people involved in responding to the cold weather spell.

Minutes

The Minutes of Nov. 8, 2013, were approved.

Financials

Pam McEwen gave three financial reports:

1. Operating budget: Ms. McEwen said it was slightly over budget primarily because the way the Day Center and Guest House are being billed. She said once the cap of that contract is reached, Room In The Inn stops invoicing the Commission and the budget will even out. "We only partially fund them, so there is no worry that we'll go over budget there," Ms. McEwen said.

Ms. McEwen also said currently there were two vacant positions. That money cannot be spent and will revert back to the General Fund.

2. Project Homeless Connect has a balance of \$14,400 right now. "We're working on an RFP right now to get somebody else to take this money and organize a PHC."

Diane Kuhn explained that the Commission decided that it needs to focus on housing people through the How's Nashville campaign and just does not have the staff to organize PHC.

3. How's Nashville: Pam McEwen said the ending balance currently is almost \$70,000. She also mentioned a grant that will come from MDHA in the amount of about \$200,000.

Angie Hubbard of MDHA said that following the fundraising event at the Downtown Library in June, MDHA wanted to see how they could support the effort. “It just so happened that the next day we got an allocation from HUD and that included an increase.” She said the \$200,000 grant would be available for How’s Nashville to pay for rent deposits, utility deposits and first month’s rent for all clients coming through How’s Nashville. “We are so excited to be able to partner with the Homelessness Commission.”

Budget

Diane Kuhn said the Commission’s budget was \$1.4 million. She said at this point, the Commission does not know whether there will be a budget reduction requested and if so how much that would be. However, the only options for budget cuts are in the contracts. In anticipation of a potential cut, the Commission would have to agree that where that cut would be made. Once it is voted on, the Metro Social Services Board of Commissioners will vote on it as part of the overall Metro Social Services budget.

Megan Barry made a motion to approve the budget with anticipated cuts to come evenly out of the contracts. Steven Samra seconded the motion, all approved.

Contract Reports:

Park Center: SOAR program

Ashley Blum, homeless outreach supervisor with Park Center, gave a brief presentation on the SOAR program. SOAR stands for SSI/SSDI Outreach Access and Recovery and it is a fast-track mobility model that is used to do outreach in the street and in-reach into jail and mental health facilities to connect people with SSI/SSDI income. Ms. Blum reported that since inception in 2006, over 508 approvals for SSI/SSDI were made and only 11 denials. In addition to linking people with benefits, they are also connected with insurance when applicable/eligible. Ms. Blum further reported that since July 1, Park Center has helped housed 50 people – 14 went into transitional and 36 into permanent housing.

The average time from the application to the date of the decision has been 55 days. This compares to about 2 years for someone who does not receive assistance through SOAR. During the last fiscal year (July 1, 2010 to June 30, 2013), Park Center made 85 applications; 84 were approved, 1 was denied, the average approval time was 38 days. Further discussion focused on the average income, which is \$721 per month for SSI. If someone gets SSI and SSDI, the benefit is \$741. In addition to providing SOAR assistance, Park Center also trains SOAR coordinators at other organizations.

Centerstone:

Megan Bird of Centerstone reported that 22 referrals were made. Centerstone currently is serving 67 people. About 20 people are being moved over into phase two of the Critical Time Intervention approach that Centerstone uses. There are three phases in the CTI model, each lasts about 3 months. If a person needs more time, the last phase can be extended up to a year (which means an additional 3 months).

Room In The Inn:

Rachel Hester, executive director of Room In The Inn (RITI) gave an extensive report on RITI's Day Center and Guest House programs. She gave a Power Point presentation and handout (both handouts are attached in Appendix A).

Director's Report

Diane Kuhn said that Doug Hausken was no longer with the Commission, so Will Connelly was looking to fill the two vacant positions.

Cold Weather Plan

Will Connelly gave a brief update on the Cold Weather situation with an extreme cold spell from Jan. 5-8.

"I gained an even greater appreciation for Room In The Inn, the Rescue Mission and Open Table Nashville for what they do every day," Mr. Connelly said. "Every day they're saving lives."

Mr. Connelly reported how the Metro departments came together to plan a response to ensure that all was done to reach out to people and get them indoors during the dangerous cold. Meetings were held in the Mayor's Office including OEM, Metro Police, Water, the Fire Department, the Deputy Mayor, and the Mayor. Erik Cole and Kristine LaLonde were very helpful throughout the planning and ensured that a focus was kept on people who are homeless. Metro organized an overflow shelter. Judith Tackett set up a shelter dispatch line that ran from 5:30 p.m. to 1 a.m., and Mr. Connelly was involved in canvassing the areas, transporting people to shelters, and helping coordinate between the warming shelters.

The Metro overflow shelter was open from Sunday through Thursday morning.

"There were some people who refused to go inside, so we got back to check on them,"

Mr. Connelly said. "There were a couple of times where we made a decision to force people to go inside because of the people's mental health state. We called Mobile Crisis and police."

Not everything went perfectly, but Mr. Connelly said that the Commission staff would meet with Metro internally next week and also with the shelter providers. "I would like to use this foundation to move forward with the Cold Weather Plan, so it's not such a last-minute response."

Charles Strobel recommended pulling everybody involved together. Metro needs to hear from the nonprofits.

How's Nashville:

Will Connelly said between June 1 through the end of December 316 people have moved into permanent housing. This number reflects move-ins reported through the How's Nashville campaign and move-ins reported by nonprofit organizations who have housed people who meet the definition of chronic homelessness. In July, the Homelessness Commission started a partnership with MDHA on Section 8 vouchers. Under that partnership, MDHA is setting aside 18 Section 8 vouchers per month for the How's Nashville campaign. Mr. Connelly said about 100 Section 8 vouchers were given to people eligible for the How's Nashville campaign, meaning they are either chronically homeless or have been homeless for several months and are considered vulnerable. About

60 people have been utilizing that housing, that leaves about 40 people who have a voucher and are currently looking for housing.

In addition, the campaign is working with landlords who set aside private units at reduced rents. Currently about 30 such units are occupied by How's Nashville participants. "We are making another pledge to get more landlords over the next couple of months," Mr. Connelly said. "There are people who just do not qualify for Section 8 – mostly due to their criminal history. The private units can be a little more lenient on some of the background issues."

Overall, about 10 people have fallen out of housing. Most of the people who have been evicted, have found other housing or moved in with family. "So most of them have not fallen back into homelessness."

Mr. Connelly said the campaign was getting better at tracking how people were doing. "For Section 8, VASH, and Centerstone, we can monitor that pretty easily."

Commissioners had questions about what happens with furniture when people lose their housing. Will Connelly explained that bedding will not always be reused. But Open Table Nashville has been coordinating the furnishing of apartments for How's Nashville participants. They will go and reuse furniture when appropriate. They organize the pick up of donated furniture, storage and move-in of many of the participants. If people are evicted, they are already connected to community organizations including Centerstone, Park Center, Open Table Nashville, Mental Health Coop, etc. "We keep working with them." These organizations re-engage people and look for other housing options.

Coordinated Assessment:

Will Connelly said that on Feb 5 and 6, there will be a two-day boot camp to train people on a Coordinated Entry System in Nashville. Up to 30 people representing different organizations will be participating. The goal of the Coordinated Entry System is to have clear entry points into the system by having uniform assessment tools and also some data sharing capabilities between agencies. Mr. Connelly said that currently Nashville does not have a real time list of housing inventory. The Coordinated Entry System could include that we come up with a way to create one. "It's going to take a while to solve and to improve, but at least we are taking a first step." Mr. Connelly said the training will be provided by facilitators from the 100,000 Homes Campaign.

Megan Barry asked whether there would be a wrap up session afterwards where people could participate and hear a summary of what's going on.

Moment of Silence

3 additional names since homeless memorial on Dec. 14 were read:

John Gonzales

Albert Roundtree

Patricia Stewart

Announcements

No announcements were made

Public Hearing

Howard Allen spoke about the Homeless Memorial on December 14 and thanked all participants. He said he wished more commissioners had participated. He said he saw five commissioner and two staff members (*note: all three staff members were present*). He also said that The Contributor did not have a writer to cover the story, which he said was really sad. He also said voiced his concern for an uncalled for disruption during the Memorial caused by one of the participants.

Jim Johnston said the poor were not a police problem. He said poverty was a social problem and police shouldn't be involved in this. He said there was no transparency or accountability in all of this. "We don't know where you're headed or what you're going to do. Room In The Inn, they have no qualified help. They have not any help. We need to have some transparency and accountability in this." Mr. Johnston said that homelessness was not a religious problem. It was a social problem, but, he said, everybody wanted to push religious issue on people who are homeless. "And the Homelessness Commission is kicking the can down the road... We're exploiting the homeless as far as I'm concerned. It's time we do something about it."

Barry Hobbes addressed the Commission talking about funding needs. He said to address the issue the underfunding needed to be stopped. Mr. Hobbes also talked about the weather saying the while it was correct that temperatures start to get dangerous in the mid to upper 30s, the reality is that people will refuse to go indoors until it is much colder.

Lindsey Krinks said the community "mourned the loss of a lot of our friends here. But I also want to celebrate the fact that nobody froze to death. Last year, we marched a coffin into this meeting to memorize someone who froze to death." Ms. Krinks praised the current collaborations and said, "Let's keep working together."

Denis Huey asked about the two open positions and what qualifications they required. Mr. Connelly said one was a bachelor's degree with one year experience, the other called for a master's degree.

Steve Reiter talked about the cold weather spell and said it would have been nice if some community centers in different parts of town had been open. He said there were people who are banned from the Mission, RITI and other place. "There are people that have problems. But if they want to get shelter on that night, they need to go some place. If we're doing programs, we have to stop cherry picking people." He also talked about the 50th anniversary on the war on poverty while at the same time Congress was talking about cutting food stamps.

Gary Thomas thanks all agencies – RITI, VA, and others – who helped him while he was in school. He has finished his degree and moved into his apartment yesterday, which was all able thanks to the help from local agencies.

A motion was made and seconded to adjourn the meeting. All approved.